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STUDY OF FITNESS REPORTING

1. Approach Used

A study of the effectiveness of the current Fitness Reporting System was accomplished through the examination of a representative sample of 300 Fitness Reports completed during 1960 and through the review of comments and suggestions on fitness reporting received voluntarily or upon request from supervisors, personnel officers, and employees. In addition, the statistical distribution of ratings on overall performance for [REDACTED] reports prepared during 1960 was tabulated and analyzed. The conclusions of this review and the suggestions advanced to correct deficiencies noted are set forth in the following sections.

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2. Rating Standards

A. Tabulations of the distribution of fitness report ratings on Performance of Specific Duties, Overall Performance and Description of the Employee are presented in Tabs B-1, 2, 3 and 4. They show the following:

(1) Performance of Specific Duties

The ratings given to three specific duties were used for this analysis. The profiles for the three major directorates show a very close similarity in the use of the seven degree rating scale (Tab B-1). Rating Number One, Unsatisfactory, was not used at all, and Rating Number Seven, Outstanding, was used to a remarkably close degree. The percentage of use of Ratings Three, Four, Five and Six were very close for the DD/I and DD/P whereas in the DD/S area lower ratings were given. A comparative distribution of the ratings of the first three specific duties of a proportionate sample from each of the individual career services of the three major directorates is presented in Tab B-4. This reveals the same pattern as mentioned immediately above. This analysis also included a breakdown by the following grade groupings: GS 6-8; GS 9-11; and GS 12-13. A direct relationship of higher ratings for higher grades was evident.

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(2) Overall Performance in Current Position

Rating of Overall Performance employed the use of a six-degree rating scale. As in the case of the seven-degree scale used for rating Specific Performance, Rating Number One was used extremely infrequently (Tab B-2). While there was a high degree of similarity in the profiles for the grade groupings GS 6-8 and GS 9-11, it was again evident that the higher the grade the higher the frequency of higher ratings.

The distribution of Overall Ratings by major directorate was very similar to those for Specific Performance. The DD/I and DD/P assigned more ratings at the two higher levels of rating, Superior and Outstanding, than the DD/S; however, the three directorates compare very closely when the three top levels of rating are combined.

(3) Description of the Employee

A five-degree rating scale was used for this purpose. Tab B-3 shows a high degree of similarity in the assignment of ratings both when viewed from a Career Service standpoint and from a grade grouping standpoint. The highest rating, Five, Outstanding, was assigned to approximately twenty percent of the items rated. This is a considerably greater use of the Outstanding Rating for this purpose than in the evaluation of the Performance of Specific Duties or Overall Performance. Characteristic of this analysis the individual DD/I and DD/P Career Services employed the two higher ratings, Above Average Degree and Outstanding Degree, more frequently than those of the DD/S, (Tab B-4).

(4) The averages for all ratings for each of these rating categories are as follows:

<u>Rating Category</u>	<u>Rating Scale</u>	<u>Agency Average</u>
	(Seven Degree Scale)	
Specific Duties	4 Competent 5 Excellent 6 Superior	5.0 Excellent
	(Six Degree Scale)	
Overall Performance	4 Clearly Exceeds Requirements 5 Superior in Every Important Respect	4.3
	(Five Degree Scale)	
Description of the Employee	3 Normal Degree 4 Above Average 5 Outstanding	4.0 Above Average

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B. The nature of the distribution of Fitness Report ratings and averages in the foregoing might raise questions and point to conclusions such as the following:

- (1) The use of three separate rating scales of five, six and seven degrees makes it difficult for a supervisor to apply standards clearly and uniformly to the three separate rating categories used in the report.
- (2) In the use of Fitness Reports for personnel management purposes, a difficulty, similar to that in (1) above, exists causing management officials to usually focus on the rating for Overall Performance, and the narrative statement in their interpretation of a Fitness Report.
- (3) Inasmuch as the performance of nearly all Agency personnel clearly or greatly exceeds the requirements of their positions, are our people overqualified for the work? Or, are our standards of performance established too low? Or, is the terminology used for our rating standards confusing and unclear? (We have long maintained that our qualifications standards are high and the requirements of most of our work difficult and demanding.)
- (4) Reviewing Officials may be encouraging unrealistic rating practices by their failure to play an active role in the application of rating standards and contribution to the evaluation of the individual.
- (5) Rating officials may be inadequately trained in the important supervisory function of employee evaluation and fitness reporting.

C. Although some validity may be accorded to each of the above possible conclusions, there are a number of extenuating circumstances which also must be given careful consideration in any attempt to improve our rating practices:

- (1) Difficulty in stating, understanding and interpreting rating standards is not limited to CIA but has long existed in other agencies, the military services and in private organizations. Despite constant efforts to achieve valid rating programs, no one system has yet emerged as conspicuously successful. Our current fitness report form is generally regarded as superior to or at least as good as any previously used.
- (2) In CIA, it is difficult to provide adequate recognition for individuals who perform well. The Fitness Report thus serves an important purpose of recognizing on the record good or exceptional achievement and performance. The trend, understandably, has been to take a liberal approach in the interest of management-employee relations. This approach has been justified particularly for small overseas units where close and harmonious supervisor-employee association is imperative to successful operation.

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- (3) Most Agency assignments do not lend themselves to precise definition and description nor to the establishment of formal standards of performance. Characteristically, our system has long recognized that the capabilities of the individual influence what his position, its requirements, and frequently, the grade level will be. Thus, the individual and the job are more nearly synonymous in CIA than in most organizations, a fact which complicates the use of job requirements as a standard for measuring effectiveness of performance.
- (4) Perplexing problems have arisen when Career Service officials have sought to take adverse action against an employee frankly acknowledged to be substandard but whose Fitness Report faithfully documents his performance and capability over the years as consistently distinguished.
- (5) In recognition of the need for improving existing employee evaluation practices, several of our Career Service Heads and operating officials have made and are making genuine and aggressive efforts to obtain realistic ratings. Some successes have been achieved, but a unified, Agency-wide effort in this respect has not been undertaken.

The above characteristics of fitness reporting in the Agency have been taken into account in developing the proposal which follows for revising the fitness reporting program. Early in our review, we concluded that it would be preferable and more acceptable to employees and supervisors alike to institute revised rating standards and practices coupled with the introduction of a substantially new fitness report form rather than attempting major readjustments in rating while continuing to use the existing rating scales and form.

3. Numerical Rating Scales

The current Fitness Report Form, Tab B-5, uses separate and independently defined rating scales for evaluating performance of Specific Duties, Overall Performance, and Employee Characteristics in Sections B, C and D, respectively. The scales have seven, six, and five degrees of discrimination in order to eliminate standardization or direct comparison between the respective factors rated. In practice, however, the variance in rating scales and the necessity to use a different adjectival or descriptive definition of the scale for each part of the Fitness Report have caused complications and misunderstandings and detracted from the acceptance of the Report. Some of the complications may have resulted from the fact that, based on a strict comparison of the degree definitions, there are literally nine (9) distinguishable degrees of ratings now in use.

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<u>Degree</u>	<u>Section B Specific Duties</u>	<u>Section C Overall Performance</u>	<u>Section D Employee Characteristics</u>
1.	Unsatisfactory (1)	Fails to Meet Requirements (1)	Least Possible Degree (1)
2.	Barely Adequate (2)	.....	Limited Degree (2)
3.	.....	Meets Most Requirements; (2) Deficient in One or More Important respects	.....
4.	Acceptable (3)	.....	.....
5.	Competent (4)	Meets Basic Requirements (3)	Normal Degree (3)
6.	.....	Exceeds Basic Requirements (4)	Above Average (4)
7.	Excellent (5)	.....	.....
8.	Superior (6)	Superior (5)	.....
9.	Outstanding (7)	Outstanding (6)	Outstanding (5)

Comments received from supervisors, personnel officers, and employees (including several independent employee suggestions submitted under the Suggestions Awards Program) favor simplification and standardization of the rating scale. Accordingly the revised rating scale proposed in Section B is designed to eliminate difficulties occasioned by the incongruous rating scales in the present form.

4. Content and Format of the Fitness Report

The following paragraphs summarize findings with respect to the effectiveness of the various major sections of the Current Fitness Report, Form 45, Tab 5, and outline recommended changes. A revised Form 45, incorporating the changes, is attached as Tab B-6.

(1) Section A - General Form 45

This section covers basic data identifying the employee and and his status. Changes are required to indicate category of employee to replace section currently titled "Career Staff Status".

(2) There was general agreement that specific major duties warrant individual evaluation on an adjective scale, but the current seven degree rating must be simplified. There was also a proposal that each specific duty receive a narrative evaluation. A five degree

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scale has been provided in the proposed form, however, a narrative evaluation of specific duties is not planned. The revised instructions state that a rater may use Section C, Narrative Description of Job Performance (proposed form) for comments regarding a specific duty by direct reference to that duty.

(3) Section C - Evaluation of Overall Performance

The concensus was that an adjective rating scale for evaluating overall performance was essential to the purposes a fitness report should serve in the Agency. Most comments received emphasized that it should be made clear that each employee is being compared with others of similar level and type of work in CIA as well as against his job--not with the population at large. This comparison can only be made within a framework of the rater's knowledge of other people doing similar work. The same five-degree rating scale that is used for the rating of specific duties is also to be used for overall performance. In addition, the instructions provide for comment in the narrative on the relative performance of the person being rated with other people known to the rater doing similar work.

(4) Section D - Description of the Employee

The weight of opinion by users of the Report is that the ratings of specific characteristics are not very meaningful and could well be discontinued. It was pointed out that such characteristics as "Gets Things Done", "Resourceful", "Writes Effectively", and the like would, if applicable to the job performed, be considered in the level of rating accorded specific duties and also in the narrative evaluations of performance. Accordingly, the purpose of this section might be served equally well if the Fitness Report directions (Tab B-7) include instructions to the following effect:

"In the evaluation of the manner of performance of specific duties and overall job performance, the following factors will be considered and specifically commented upon when they are considered of significance in the job:

Productivity	Mobility
Decisiveness	Records Discipline
Resourcefulness	Versatility
Supervisory Effectiveness	Cost Consciousness
Ability to Think Clearly	
Acceptance of Responsibility	
Effectiveness of Written Expression	
Effectiveness of Oral Expression	

Section D could then be eliminated, and the report thereby simplified without losing any vital elements.

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(5) Section E - Narrative Description of Manner of Job Performance

This narrative section is acknowledged by virtually all users as the most informative and reliable part of the Fitness Report. Its retention is unanimously desired. In fact, several suggestions were to expand this section by providing additional space and establishing separate subsections to assure receipt of narrative comments on items such as strengths, weaknesses, potential, recommended training and future assignments, and suitability for overseas. It will be noted that this type of approach was used for several years by the Agency, Form 37-151, May 1952, Tab A-3, and to a lesser degree on succeeding report forms. The approach was abandoned, however, by the Council Task Force in developing the current form. The Task Force reasoned that greater flexibility and more useful narrative information would result if we do not force raters into following a rigid pattern but merely provide guide lines as to coverage. Results since then have proven generally satisfactory and support the Task Force position. However, as a further improvement it is considered desirable to require descriptions in this section of supervisory and management responsibilities in addition to their being listed and rated among Specific Duties in Section B.

Raters will be expected to sum up characteristics of performance--in comparison to job requirements and in relation to that of other individuals doing similar work--and will include information on personal characteristics, qualifications, potential for future job assignments, and training or developmental assignments recommended.

(6) Section F - Certification and Comments

Few comments or suggestions were received as to the use or continuance of this section. It was found that the subsection which provides that the supervisor return the blank form with explanation when a report is not being made was serving little useful purpose and can be eliminated to save paper work. The same effect can be achieved through using other sections of the report for this purpose. The proposed instructions will so indicate.

In Section D, 1 space has been provided for the person being rated to check a box to indicate that he has attached a memorandum regarding the report, should he desire to submit one.

In the subsection providing for Certifications and Comments by the Reviewing Official, it is noted that in about 96% of the cases, the Reviewing Official would have given the employee about the same evaluation; in 1% the Reviewing Official would have rated the employee higher; in 1% lower. In 2% of the cases, the Reviewing Official was not sufficiently familiar with the employee's

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performance to evaluate. In only about 10% of the 96% did the Reviewing Official make comments which could be judged as contributing substantially to the usefulness of the report.

The role of the Reviewing Official and his accountability for endorsement of Fitness Report ratings have not been strongly emphasized in most parts of the Agency. We believe that more positive action by the Reviewing Official will greatly help in achieving a realistic rating program, and accordingly recommend that a narrative evaluation by the Reviewing Officer be encouraged. In the new Section D-3 we would hope that the Reviewing Officer will state why he would give the employee the same or different evaluation and amplify the rating official's comments on the employee's overall evaluation. Present procedures for resolving wide divergencies of opinion between rater and reviewer by the Director of Personnel and the head of the Career Service concerned and for notifying employees would be continued.

5. Proposed Fitness Report Form (Tab 6)

Recommendations made in the preceding Section 4 are incorporated in the form together with the basic instructions considered necessary. This form will be supplemented by a more detailed Instruction (Tab 7).

6. Fitness Report Procedures

Regulation [REDACTED] Fitness Report, established current procedures which are consistent with the recommendations of this study. The scheduling of reports by grade groups with timing related to promotion considerations has been found to be useful. The use of memorandum in lieu of Fitness Report for GS-14 and above personnel is recommended with the understanding that the content of the memorandum will be generally consistent with the evaluations called for in the revised Fitness Report Form.

- Tab 1 - Evaluation of Specific Duties
- Tab 2 - Evaluation of Overall Performance in Current Position
- Tab 3 - Description of Employee
- Tab 4 - Tabulation of Fitness Report Ratings by Career Service & Grade
- Tab 5 - Current Form 45
- Tab 6 - Proposed Form 45
- Tab 7 - Instructions for Fitness Report